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SUBJECT: Mission Turkey's 2006 Ramadan Programming: Bridging the  
Divide in Turkey's Polarized Society

¶1. The US mission to Turkey carried out a slate of activities during the month of Ramazan (as it is known in Turkey), to demonstrate our respect for religious faith and social traditions while enhancing and increasing our contacts with religious leaders, key figures in various segments of Turkish society, and the broad public. The mission's efforts were broadly welcomed by our contacts, demonstrating that the importance of Muslim identity and Ramazan traditions for Turkish citizens transcends the contentious debate between secular and Islamist camps within Turkey.

¶2. Ambassador, DCM, Istanbul Consul General, Adana Principal Officer and other officers hosted iftars throughout the month. The iftars involved senior religious officials, political leaders, businesspeople, journalists, and charity heads, and were specifically designed to bring together representatives from across the spectrum of Turkish society and politics.

¶3. The mission also carried out humanitarian and outreach activities in keeping with the focus on charity and community during Ramazan, including food and clothing donations to charities in Istanbul and Ankara. Ambassador and his wife visited a center for learning disabled, Istanbul CG provided boxes of food to the neighborhood "mukhtar," to share with residents of the consulate's neighborhood, and Adana PO visited a city iftar tent to participate in the traditional meal as provided to the poor. DCM and other Embassy officers went to Ankara's main mosque on "Kadir Gecesi" - traditionally the holiest night of Ramadan - accepting an exceptional invitation from the mosque's Imam to join an estimated 100,000 Turks in attendance.

WILSON